

# **Preston & District Model Railway Society**

## ***Annual General Meeting***

Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at 7:30 pm

### **Minutes**

Meeting started at 1930. There were 24 members in attendance.

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Ian Robinson, Alan Jackson, Phil Holgate, Phil Grosse.

#### **2. The minutes of the previous AGM**

The minutes of the previous AGM had been circulated to members by e-mail two weeks previously, and on the web site for well over a year, giving everyone a chance to read them for approval.

They were approved unanimously.

#### **3. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes

#### **4. Chairman's report**

This is a very brief report since our last AGM.

To state that it has been a difficult time since our last AGM would be an understatement.

Due to the Covid pandemic the club has not been available for use for almost 18 months but it is nice to report that we are up and running, but with guidance in place.

I would also like to apologise for holding the AGM here but the committee felt it better to ensure we could hold a meeting rather than arrange for an outside venue which could be cancelled at a moment's notice, also we thought it would have been difficult to arrange for supper.

The one piece of good news to be able to report is that we were extremely fortunate in that we held the 2020 exhibition just prior to the first lockdown and yet again gratitude goes to Les and his team for another success.

Les will give a report to the meeting on that and the possibility of a 2022 exhibition.

Due to the closure of the club, it gave a chance for one of our members to carry out extensive improvements to his layout, this also had the benefit of ensuring that the club rooms were being monitored on a regular basis.

We did receive a large grant from the Council and this has proved valuable in helping to keep the club solvent over the last year as there has been a substantial reduction in paid subscriptions and had it not been for this grant it is quite possible that the club may have folded. Although the club was closed, we still had all the usual bills to pay and that is where the grant has been used.

The Treasurer will give his report later to the meeting.

As is said every year it is up to the membership to ensure that we pay our subscriptions promptly to maintain the smooth running of the club as it is our subscriptions that keep the club open.

Where possible club and owner's layouts have been to exhibitions also Les demonstrating various techniques, all representing the club and for this we are very grateful.

As you will have noticed we have had a stairlift fitted, it was a difficult decision to make but we have to ensure that the club is available to all. I know from personal experience, that in the past we have had prospective members come along but decided not to join as they couldn't manage the stairs.

Although comments were made that it would hinder the moving of layouts, this seemed a small price to pay for the chance to attract new members to the club.

Bill will not be standing for re-election to the Committee and we would like to express our thanks for his service these past few years.

Hopefully the next 12 months will be a vast improvement on the past and I wish you all happy and enjoyable modelling.

### *Questions*

There were no questions.

## **5. Treasurer's report**

### *Questions*

There were numerous questions, mostly revolving around the fact that some members had failed to pay subs during lockdown and the grant of £10k from the local council.

*Have people who failed to pay had to reapply to become members?* This is what the rules say. It was noted that if no one had continued to pay, the club would have folded.

It is thought that as word of the grant became public, some members assumed they no longer needed to pay. Compare to, for example, gyms, which stopped charging members during lockdown.

It was noted that the grant was there to be had; the club did not apply for it for the purpose of suspending subs. The assumption is made that subscriptions will be used to cover basic running costs. The grant was seen as a bonus, similar to profits from the exhibition, available for the extras, like layouts.

It was noted that the shortfall from subs was about £1700 a year for the last two years.

*What is the status of the deposit account?* This remains unchanged and untouched, at slightly over £16k. The treasurer was asked to include the deposit account in the next AGM report.

*Why were members not informed about the £10K grant?* The committee wanted to see how the club was doing and how long it would be in lockdown before making any decision. There was a fear people would expect to be able to stop paying subs if they knew about it.

*Have non-paying members been given three months notice?* Not for now.

*Has any concession been made for members in financial difficulty, perhaps furloughed?* No member has asked for help. The committee would have certainly been receptive to such a request, but if no request is made, none is granted.

*Do we need to increase subs?* An increase in subs is usually discussed at the AGM, but was felt inappropriate at this stage. It is likely this will need addressing, perhaps at an EGM in six months, once the number of paid-up members has been established.

*What of nonpayers?* Should they get an amnesty? Told to pay up? Thrown out? This has yet to be decided.

*What of the exhibition account?* See later.

## **6. Auditor's report**

Alan is very ill, and though able to do the audit, helped by his son, Andy, he was not able to attend the meeting. His report was given by JF.

A new club auditor is now required.

Neville proposed a vote of thanks for all the work Alan has done for the club; he has been the club auditor for as long as anyone can remember. Taken on a general aye.

Les proposed and Nev seconded accepting both the treasurer's report and the auditor's report. Taken on a general aye.

## **7. Exhibition report**

*Last Exhibition – Daryl*

The exhibition fund has £11,07 after £3150 was spent on the chairlift. Takings on the door for the 2020 exhibition were about £6500 on Saturday and \$4500 on Sunday. Overall we made a profit of £3693.74.

#### *Next Exhibition – Les*

The exhibition will go ahead at the usual venue, on 5/6<sup>th</sup> March, 2022.

Layouts booked have all been pushed back one year. The one exception is G-Whizz, unable to attend for personal reasons. It will be replaced by a layout by Terry of Southport. This will make 19 layouts.

There are 16 trade stands confirmed. Some losses due to traders retiring, etc. Three are taking extended footage. There are 10 miscellaneous stands.

The hall and hotel are the same price as there were in 2020. Posters should be out soon.

It was noted that insurance will not cover us if it is cancelled because of changes in the COVID situation.

#### *Questions*

*Why did the exhibition fund pay for the stairlift? Why not apply for National Lottery funds?* The exhibition fund is for the extras, not the day-to-day stuff. Experience from outside the club had shown that National Lottery money is very hard to come by with a lot of hoops to jump through.

*Will we use cashless tills?* Les had looked into this, but decided against. It goes through an intermediary, so it is 2-3 weeks before you get the money and a significant charge too. It will therefore be cash only.

### **8. Updates to the rules**

A new set of rules was proposed by CW, and seconded by DP. It was necessary to go through each proposed change.

*“Rules” or “Constitution”:* On a general aye, it was agreed they would continue to be called “rules”.

*Article 2:* “objective” or “objectives”; the latter being good grammar, it was accepted on a general aye.

*Article 2d:* The new version was accepted.

*Article 3a1:* 65 and above or 66 and above: The latter was accepted

*Article 3c:* A further addition to the rules “end of the calendar month” was proposed, and accepted.

*Article 5a:* The new version was accepted.

*Article 5b:* Issues with asking members to pay in advance were discussed, in particular with regards to people who were currently in arrears after-lock down, but the new version was accepted.

*Article 5c:* The new version was accepted.

*Article 5e:* The new version was accepted.

*Article 5g:* The new version reduces the distance for country membership from 30 miles to 20, and makes it clear this is as the crow flies. After discussion, this was accepted.

### *The Committee*

The new rules propose a vice-chairman as an elected role. JW pointed out that currently a vice-chairman can be appointed by the committee, and this has worked well for 40 years. The proposal was dropped by general agreement.

The new rules propose a social media manager as an elected role. CW explained this would involve Facebook advertising for the exhibition, Twitter, etc. as well as publicising the club for prospective younger (under 30!) members.

JW recognised the value in the role, but suggested the post should be someone appointed by the committee – not necessarily a committee member. He also pointed out the person would have to liaise closely with Les. The proposal was dropped by general agreement.

The new rules propose a total of nine on the committee, rather than seven, expended to include the roles described above. This was dropped by general agreement.

*Article 6c:* The new rules, with an expanded committee, proposed the char or vice char plus five other members to be quorum. This was revised to five members, the original number, but dropping the requirement for chair. Accepted by general agreement.

*Article 6d:* The new rules proposed meetings every calendar month. In practice this has been found to be unnecessary. CW pointed out that minutes can then only become available after ten weeks. Nevertheless, the new rule was dropped by general agreement (but see 7b).

*Article 7b:* Following from 6d, there was discussion about when minutes should be published, given they need to be ratified by the committee. It was decided that a draft would be published within a week, to be ratified at the next meeting. Accepted by general agreement.

*Article 7g:* To be re-worded to say “paid-up members of the society”, as the previous wording could be understood to exclude senior members.

*Article 8:* A lively discussion revolved around how to handle purchases on small items; should we limit it to £20 or £50. An election was called, with the results counted as 7 vs 9, and so £50 was adopted as the new limit.

Spending by the committee was discussed. The rules would limit this to £1000 without an AGM/EGM vote. There was concern that this would limit layout building, and a suggestion it be limited to non-modelling items, but ultimately the decision was made to drop the last two paragraphs from the new rules, removing the proposed limit. Accepted by general agreement.

*Article 9:* Third and fourth paragraphs approved by general agreement.

*Article 16:* This revolves around liability of the members in the event the club folds. It is unchanged in the proposed rules, but other members had expressed concerns.

There is a fund to cover anticipated costs, but in the event of an insurance claim, members could be liable. It was unclear what insurance we already have and what we should have.

It was noted that people helping at the exhibition should be made members for the weekend – Friday to Saturday – so are covered by the club insurance. We should also consider doing likewise for prospective members who come to the club rooms.

The committee resolved to investigate further (JF to talk to Magnet Insurance), and to call an EGM to discuss further, once the facts are known.

#### *Additional*

JF proposed that if an AGM cannot be held for extraordinary reason – such as a pandemic – the rules should say the committee continues unchanged. Taken on general agreement.

NOTE: Approval of the rules needs to wait until after the EGM.

### **9. Election of committee members**

The positions of chairman, secretary and treasure were unopposed, and given to the current incumbent in each case.

There were five candidates for the unspecified committee positions after one candidate withdrew. After secret ballot, Carl Bowden, Tom Springett, Chris Wilkes and Dave Pallant were duly elected.

### **10 AOB**

#### *Chairlift*

CW raised some issues with regards to the chairlift. It has a two year warranty, and serving is free during that time. Thereafter £40 a year.

It seems unlikely its “home” position can be moved to the bend, which would be more out of the way, and less likely to knock people carrying stock.

It was noted that DG went to three different suppliers to get quotes. Approval was not minuted because it was done during lock-down, via e-mail.